DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 070 682 SO 002 070

AUTHOR Mosher, Ralph L.
TITLE Objectives of Training Programs for Secondary School Teachers of Psychology.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting, American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Behavioral Sciences; *Educational Objectives; *Psychology; Secondary Education; *Social Sciences; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

Basic assumptions of this paper are that psychology should be and will be taught in American high schools. Two basic arguments for teaching pre-college psychology are to teach students the scientific method and to familiarize students about ways in which human beings develop and behave, in the long run upgrading human potential. Rather than a survey course, it is suggested that several elective courses be offered. Main objectives of training programs for secondary school teachers of psychology are to not only prepare teachers academically for subject mastery but, moreover, to be able to help students apply and personalize the principles of psychology; to train teachers in pedagogical skills; to educate teachers in the knowledge of adolescent growth and behavior so they will be sensitive to personal concerns of students; and to develop and evaluate psychology curriculum. Most importantly psychology should have an educational effect on the adolescent. (SJM)

ED 070682

DRAFT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

SP 002 070

OBJECTIVES OF TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF PSYCHOLOGY

Ralph L. Mosher
Associate Professor

Harvard Graduate School of Education

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Paper for Division Two and E & T Board
American Psychological Association

Washington, 1971

I would like to begin with several assumptions about the teaching of psychology at the secondary school level. First, psychology increasingly will be taught in American high schools. There are several reasons for this: 1) It is already happening. Like Topsy, psychology in high school has grown and continues to do so. 2) Yet psychology still represents a relative novelty in the curriculum of the average secondary school and novelty, per se, is attractive. That both novelty and mystique attach to "psychology" in the perception of many high school students (and teachers) is a motivational fact. Whether this is an interest in psychology for the "wrong" reasons is not the point. The issue is the kinds of programs and teaching in psychology developed as a response to this and by whom. 3) Part of the impetus for teaching psychology in high school comes as extension of the curriculum reform movements in mathematics, science and social studies in the 1960's. The effect of that movement was largely to rationalize the existing secondary school curriculum, i.e. to produce academically up-to-date versions of the traditional high school subjects. There now are pressures from a number of sources for genuinely new curricula and subjects for the secondary school. Interest in psychology derives from both sources, i.e. curriculum maintenance and curriculum reformulation. 4) The profession of psychology now is asserting an interest in the teaching of psychology at the "pre-college level." One effect of this will be to accelerate the teaching of psychology in the high school.

Let me add a further assumption. Psychology should be taught in secondary schools. There are at least two arguments for doing so. One is that we should teach psychology as a way to teach the scientific method, i.e. how to think logically and empirically about (human) behavior. My colleague, Professor Sprinthall, terms this the "logical positivist" position. In teaching psychology we contribute to the adolescent's cognitive

development and introduce him to the scientific method as applied to the study of (human) behavior. This objective in teaching psychology is quite analogous to that argued on behalf of the biology and physical sciences curricula in high school. The degree to which those fields have escaped accountability on this claim augurs for an extended period of grace for psychology too - which is probably all for the best. There is a certain irony for me in psychologists offering themselves as models of rationality (or of psychiatrists offering themselves as models of tranquility).

A second reason for teaching psychology in high school is the George Miller argument that we should "give psychology away." Psychology is one significant source of intelligence about how human beings develop and behave. High schools, in their pre-occupation with cognitive development through academic subjects, have been woefully deficient in providing systematic educational experiences to affect ego, ethical, and aesthetic development. This deficiency seems particularly inexcusable during adolescence, with its particular developmental tasks of identity formation, the development of ethical judgement, etc. Psychology can offer more than codified knowledge about the course of human development. I believe it can also offer contexts in which it is possible to incorporate powerful correlative learning experience. For example, not only is it possible to teach principles of child development to adolescents, it also is possible to have them validate and personalize some of that "abstract" learning by working as nursery school teachers. Similarly, educational psychology can be taught to high school students in conjunction with student teaching in a variety of elementary school assignments. The point is that psychology can be an intellectual resource as well as a curriculum context for significant

role taking and competency development in adolescence.

While I personally believe the Miller position has the wider applicability to the secondary school, I support both the "logical positivist" and the "give psychology away" arguments. It would be a serious mistake to reproduce the vitiating history of doctrinal disputes in psychology in the development of curricula for the secondary school. Rather, curriculum development work should be sponsored which incorporates different assumptions, objectives, materials and procedures in teaching high school psychology. Let high school teachers and especially students elect. Some high school students will want an experience of psychology as essentially cognitive, abstract and methodological. They should have that experience. For a larger number of students I believe psychology has particular potential to combine respectable intellectual inquiry with applications of psychology in real roles. Students should be able to have that experience of psychology as well. For these reasons I oppose one introductory survey course in high school. I think we might learn something from the usual reputation of such courses at the college level. The purposes of high school psychology are different from those at the college level. I worry very much, however, that high school psychology will become an introductory survey course - largely academic, broad in coverage and without significant experiences by which adolescents can validate psychology.

Now I want to turn directly to the topic: the objectives of training programs for secondary school teachers of psychology. First, let me say that the prior main problem is to develop and evaluate curricula in psychology for the secondary school. In brief, I think we need to support over the next 5-8 years a number of curriculum development projects in high school psychology so that we have some

operating and "tested" examples of what we mean by teaching psychology in high school - what kinds of psychology, what instructional materials, with what outcomes or effects - before involving ourselves substantially in teacher training. I will say more about this presently. But sooner or later, of course, the problem becomes one of teacher training, i.e. how do we prepare the teachers of psychology for the secondary schools?

In this respect, I feel that training programs should have four main objectives. These are:

1) Subject matter "mastery" in psychology

2) Pedagogical skill

3) Knowledge of adolescents

4) The ability to develop and evaluate curriculum.

Let me talk briefly about each of these objectives in the training of secondary school teachers of psychology.

1) Subject matter "mastery" in psychology. I personally will stipulate this issue of the academic preparation of high school teachers of psychology. Such teachers should have a major or its equivalent in one field of psychology, a minor in another field of psychology would be a decided asset. I am really less interested in the particular specialty. My feeling is that a major concentration in developmental psychology, in educational psychology, social psychology, personality theory, etc. may be more broadly applicable to high school curricula and teaching than a concentration in physiological or experimental psychology. However, I think it is too early in the game to obsess over this kind of issue. My reasons for stressing academic preparation are the conventional ones: It is obvious that one cannot teach well what he does not know. The high school teacher of psychology should be intellectually sensitive to what is "known" and not known at this

point in his special field. In specifying academic requirements for certification, psychology will simply follow the pattern of other subject fields currently taught in high school. In my own priorities, a thorough knowledge of the subject matter is a critical prerequisite to another objective I value highly: i.e. hearing and helping adolescents to apply, to personalize the principles of psychology they are learning. For example, in our own work in teaching child development and counseling psychology to high school students, we have found it very important for the teacher to feel thoroughly conversant and comfortable with the essential subject matter in order to be able to respond to the adolescents as they try to integrate and apply this knowledge to their own experience and situation.

2) It may be stating the obvious to say that high school teachers of psychology must be trained to teach. While we do not know, in any definitive sense, how to define, measure or train for teaching effectiveness, there <u>is</u> a pedagogical craft which can be taught. I have devoted some 15 years of my professional life to training teachers and counseling psychologists and I make this assertion about a craft of pedagogy with considerable confidence. I also am cynical that any teacher training program or university is committed to <u>quality</u> teacher training, i.e. to creating optimum conditions for training teachers. Perhaps in the case of psychology it can be different. Although the focus in this symposium is on objectives in training programs I have made assertions about how to do it. Let me specify briefly some of the elements I think should be present in a significant program preparing teachers for practice: a) The number of trainees should be kept relatively small. For example, any program with more than a hundred pre-service teachers probably will exceed substantially the resources

available for their adequate practical training. b) Any training program will have to develop, i.e. train a cadre of "master teachers" whose principal job will be systematically to supervise student teaching in psychology. In my experience these people are crucial and far superior in inducting people into the craft than reliance on Flander's interaction analysis, "micro-teaching" on related procedures for pre-service training. Master teachers will use such instructional procedures but transcend them as well. c) The training program should pay such resident superisors from student tuition and pay them well (e.g. $500. per student teacher). d) There should be a concentration of training resources. For example, master teachers and student teachers should be concentrated in teams and/or in special summer schools.

3) High school teachers of psychology must have knowledge of adolescents and personal sensitivity to them. Whether such teachers wish it or not, students will turn to them with personal concerns. It is clear that I believe the psychology teacher's response to high school students as people and to their personal concerns is fully as crucial a part of his job as is communication of formal principles of psychology. He should have training to help him in this respect. The study of adolescent psychology and systematic training in counseling or communications training as developed by Carkhuff are possibilities. The particular curriculum in this respect is less important to me than the patent need for high school teachers of psychology to be able to respond to some of the personal, developmental needs of adolescents.

4) A fourth training objective is the ability to develop and evaluate curriculum. Earlier I said that the main immediate problem confronting high school psychology is the need to develop and evaluate various curricula and to train teachers in that process. Since the field of high school psychology is new, it should be possible to incorporate curriculum

development work of this kind in conjunction with the initial training programs established. In effect, teachers would have an opportunity to teach and field test various materials of instruction as they were being developed. But even when relatively definitive curricula in high school psychology have been introduced on a fairly wide scale I still feel that teachers should have some training in the process of conceptualizing new curricula or courses, translating those ideas into materials and educational experiences and evaluating the effects of such courses. To be rather continually analyzing the content and the method of one's teaching is an essential mechanism to keep the teaching and the teacher intellectually alive. Participation in curriculum development projects is especially significant if the training program is directed at in-service or experienced high school teachers. Probably the most effective way to get such teachers to consider how they teach is to involve them in the active re-formulation and field testing of what they teach (i.e. the curriculum).

Let me say a bit more about the special problems of training programs for experienced teachers. High school psychology is presently the captive of the home economics or the social studies curriculum. There are, I think, "political," curricular and personnel consequences of this. Politically, psychology programs will not start totally de novo. There will be a jurisdictional problem, although I think that most home economics, social studies teachers and guidance counselors will welcome carefully developed curricula in psychology. But psychology in the high school at first may be a ward of established curricula areas. In regard to personnel, the point is that teachers who are now teaching psychology may expect to continue to do so. For them, in-service training programs are necessary. This means money and in fairly large amounts.

The experience of curriculum development projects in other disciplines is that it is possible to teach experienced teachers more of the particular subject matter and little else. Certainly additional graduate level training in psychology will be necessary for many experienced teachers. I have already referred to the importance of training in curriculum development and evaluation for this group. Similarly, I would train some experienced teachers as master teachers or supervisors for pre-service trainees. Finally, training in personal sensitivity to adolescents is as important for the experienced teacher as for the beginner.

Let me finish with a few general observations about training objectives. First, we can learn from history in the field of teacher education. The problem in training high school teachers of psychology will not be the adequacy of their academic preparation. That the university can do. The problem is much more whether there is a <u>will</u> to provide an adequate preparation for teaching and a comprehensive high school curriculum in psychology. There will be a tendency to assume that the essential objective is to produce academically respectable curriculum and teaching in high school psychology. For many university psychologists that is all there is to it. For some schoolmen, too, Advanced Placement or Introductory Psychology will be enough. If the objective is to teach psychology as an additional academic discipline in high school then the means to that end are available if costly.

Obviously, my own view is that psychology should not settle for this limited, "respectable" objective. True education is the stimulation of development. A.P. psychology can contribute to cognitive development. But in adolescence there is also the whole movement of ego development which includes the structure of the self-concept, of identity, moral judgement development, aesthetic development, etc. It is here, I believe, that high school psychology can have very significant educational affect on the adolescent -- if there is a commitment to do so.